

CLYDESDALE HOUSING ASSOCIATION LIMITED

Minute of the Office Bearer meeting held via conference calls on Wednesday 18 March 2020

Present: Pauline Sandford, Chairperson
Maggie Botham, Vice Chairperson
Carmena Nixon, Secretary
Susanne Crayton, Treasurer

In Attendance: The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) minute.

1. Apologies

No apologies were submitted.

2. Conflicts of Interest

There were no conflicts of interest declared.

3. Notifiable Events

As an introduction to the meeting the CEO advised the Office Bearers that any decisions taken in relation to changes to service provision would require submission of a Notifiable Event to the Scottish Housing Regulator.

4. Latest Government Coronavirus advice for Organisations

Prior to the Office Bearer meeting the CEO had circulated a copy of an email sent to staff members earlier that day that summarised discussions held by the Management Team regarding the Coronavirus pandemic.

The Office Bearers and CEO discussed the content of Scottish Government bulletins on the spread of the virus, Government actions to mitigate risks and advice to the population. This has been augmented by additional guidance for organisations in different sectors which supports the advice CHA provides to service users, our people and suppliers in order to address the challenges we face¹.

The First Minister's speech on 17 March 2020² contained "far more stringent steps to suppress... the spread of the virus...". Key recommendations included:

- Anyone with a fever or persistent cough should stay at home for seven days if they live alone or 14 days if they live with others. Anyone who lives with someone displaying coronavirus symptoms should also stay at home for 14 days. People who have to isolate themselves should ask others for help;

¹ https://hpspubsrepo.blob.core.windows.net/hps-website/nss/2973/documents/1_COVID-19-Guidance-for-non-healthcare-settings.pdf

² <https://www.gov.scot/publications/fm-covid-19/>

- Everyone should stop non-essential contact with others. This is particularly important for people over 70, those with underlying health conditions and pregnant women;
- People should avoid places like pubs, clubs and theatres. This applies especially to those in London which is "a few weeks ahead" of the rest of the UK;
- People should stop all unnecessary travel;
- By the weekend, those with the most serious health conditions should be largely shielded from social contact for 12 weeks;
- People should work from home where they can.

5. Proposals for CHA Governance Arrangements in the Short Term

Office Bearers discussed how best to manage CHA's governance in a way that adheres to Government guidance on social distancing.

CHA's Standing Orders contain the following provisions in emergency circumstances:

35. Where a decision requires to be taken on a matter outwith the schedule of meetings, and it is not practicable for a meeting (of either the Management Committee or the relevant Sub-Committee) to be called, and failure to make a decision would be prejudicial to the interests of the organisation and/or its service users, the Chief Executive has delegated authority to consult with the office bearers, and, where appropriate the Chair of the relevant Sub-Committee to make a decision and implement action. A report will then be made to the next meeting of the Management Committee or appropriate Sub-Committee for ratification. (page 6)

76. Nothing in these Standing Orders will prevent the effective implementation of approved emergency procedures that will apply in the event of a disaster or emergency situation arising. (page 11)

77. Where emergency decisions are required and it is not practicable to hold a meeting of the Management Committee or Office Bearers, the Chair (or in his/her absence, the Vice- Chair) and Chief Executive (or in his/her absence, senior staff members) will take all necessary decisions to fulfil our responsibilities to service users and partners. All such decisions and actions must be reported to the Management Committee at the earliest opportunity. (page 11)

82. Office Bearers, acting with senior staff, have authority to:

- *Represent the Association on official business, consistent with agreed policies and procedures.*
- *Implement agreed emergency procedures.*
- *Take urgent decisions and/or action between meetings, in consultation with the Chief Executive.*

- *Take decisions on specific issues between meetings that have been delegated to one or more office bearers by the Management Committee.*

83. *The Chief Executive, in consultation with senior staff, has authority to:*

- *Ensure the effective implementation of strategies, policies and plans*
- *Represent the Association on official business, consistent with agreed policies and procedures*
- *Carry out all necessary legal and financial duties to ensure compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements.*

In addition to the above, our Rules state that:

Rule 55: A written resolution signed by not fewer than three quarters of the Committee Members or three quarters of the members of a sub-committee will be as valid as if it had been passed at a Committee Meeting or sub-committee meeting duly called and constituted.

This essentially enables the Management Committee to make decisions via email or letter.

In light of the Coronavirus pandemic and guidance from the Government on social distancing, Office Bearers agreed to make the following recommendations to the Management Committee on temporary governance arrangements for CHA:

Recommendations – Set 1:

Given the above, it is recommended that the following measures to protect good governance are taken with immediate effect until 31 May 2020, when they will be reviewed by the Management Committee:

- **Cancel all Committee and sub-committee meetings, training events and workshops scheduled over March, April and May 2020;**
- **In accordance with Standing Orders delegate all Committee decision-making to Office Bearers;**
- **Provide monthly summary to Management Committee Members on decisions made by Office Bearers;**
- **Continue to provide performance reports to Committee Members for electronic/phone comment/questioning;**
- **Where deemed necessary by Office Bearers, use provisions of Rule 55 for facilitating decisions by the full Management Committee;**
- **Conduct Committee appraisal one to one meetings scheduled for 31 March and 1 April via telephone as an alternative to the usual face to face approach;**
- **Management Committee will review all of these measures by 31 May 2020.**

The CEO was instructed to prepare a report to Management Committee containing these recommendations, distribute it by email and obtain the views of Committee Members in accordance with Rule 55.

The CEO will investigate options for the use of technology in order to facilitate future Management Committee meetings through remote attendance.

6. CHA Measures for Managing Challenges Presented by Coronavirus

The Office Bearers discussed a range of measures for mitigating the risks presented by the virus. The following three desired outcomes underpin the measures developed:

- Safeguard the health & wellbeing of service users, the public, staff, committee and our suppliers;
- Safeguard service delivery to tenants and other service users in a way that does not compromise health & wellbeing;
- Protect the viability of CHA.

On conclusion of discussions, Office Bearers approved the following range of measures:

- a) Office Closure - close the office and start working from home as soon as it is possible to do so. This includes the suspension of all face to face contact with server users. It is anticipated that these arrangements will commence fully from Monday 23 March 2020.

Any service disruption caused by Coronavirus action planning must be reported to the Scottish Housing Regulator – the Chief Executive will make a Notifiable Event Submission via the Regulator's online landlord portal on 20 March 2020.

- The CEO reported that in order to prepare for the likelihood of home working, the Management Team had taken steps to arrange remote access to our server and phone system for staff. This has required:
 - The purchase of seven additional laptops and associated software licenses at a total cost of £4,494;
 - Subscription to communications software that extends the full use of our phone system to home use – monthly cost of £124;

A rota will operate for at least one member of staff to work in the office during normal working hours in order to satisfy insurance requirements for protect our furniture and fittings theft and malicious damage cover. This will also help to resource practical requirements such as daily server back-ups and mail distribution. Social distancing, personal hygiene and office cleaning protocols will be observed during this practice.

- Managers will keep in daily contact with staff via phone/video calls to keep communication flowing on how the new arrangements are working and to problem solve issues that will come up. It is also to check on staff welfare and monitor workloads.

- Anticipated school/nursery closures will present childcare difficulties to some staff members. Managers will develop flexible arrangements designed to find work patterns that allow these employees to contribute as best as possible during this time in this eventuality.

b) HR advice:

- Staff will be advised to work from home as long as they feel well enough to do so – normal sickness reporting and keeping in contact procedures will remain in place;
- Given the current extraordinary pressure on the NHS, CHA will until further notice not require medical certification for sickness lasting more than 7 days. This will be kept under review by the Management Team and staff will be advised if there are any further changes;
- Annual Leave – staff have been reminded that working from home is work and that they should still take holidays, even when they cannot get away on a trip. We need to avoid a bottle neck of unused holidays later in the year that will store up problems.

c) Service Provision:

- General: a letter to all tenants will be distributed to provide an update on the office closure and our plans to minimize service disruption. Updates on the CHA website and Facebook page will also be posted.
- Reactive Repairs:
 - The Technical Services Manager has reviewed and is satisfied with a method statement from our multi-trade contractor for managing the risks associated with carrying our reactive repairs in our properties.
 - A full reactive repairs service will continue for the time being – this will be kept under ongoing review as circumstances develop;
 - In the meantime, our contractor will source alternative tradesmen/sub-contractors to be used in the event of their own manpower being adversely impacted by the virus;
 - Internal procedures have been amended to reflect the changed circumstances with the aim of keeping the service running;
 - Cross training for staff is taking place to protect our ability to carry out business critical tasks and protect service delivery.
- Major repair contracts:
 - The Technical Services Manager is in dialogue with contractors to establish method statements for installations that will manage the risks associated with carrying works out in our properties;
 - There may be a need to suspend contracts if risks become unacceptable;
 - Contract suspension is likely to lead to an inability to meet the EESSH standard by the December 2020 deadline – if this becomes likely we will notify the Scottish Housing Regulator accordingly;

- We are checking if contract suspension could lead to any contractual issues with suppliers.

- Housing Management:
 - Housing Officers are ready to support and advise tenants on the following matters:
 - In order to protect rental income levels - maximising the use of telephone and on-line payment methods should the availability of AllPay outlets start to diminish through shop closures;
 - Applying for Universal Credit and/or other welfare benefits in circumstances where tenants experience reduced income due to self-isolation and/or job layoffs.
 - The process for dealing with tenancy terminations and re-lets has been reviewed to incorporate social distancing protocols and the office closure;
 - The process of dealing with neighbour complaints has been adapted to remove face to face contact with staff.

- Community Hub:
 - Lets have been suspended and user groups advised;
 - The planned opening event has been postponed – a new date will be arranged in due course.

The CEO was instructed to prepare a report in order to advise Management Committee Members of these decisions.

Office Bearers expressed thanks to the Management Team and staff for the business continuity planning carried out to minimise the impact of Coronavirus on CHA's service delivery.

The Office Bearer meeting was then closed.